



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 14.23

Subject: Orders of Reference

Supersedes: INV43, INV404, INV
405, INV 406 from the ROCM
Manual

Local Policy: No
Local Procedures: No
Training Required: No

Approved by:

Effective date: 05/01/01

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Application

To All Department of Children's Services Case Managers, Team Leaders, Team Coordinators, and Regional Administrators

Authority: TCA 37-5-106

Policy

Divorce, Chancery, or Juvenile courts that are considering issues of child placement and legal custody may ask DCS to complete a social report to aid the court in decision-making. The circumstance may or may not include allegations of child abuse or neglect. When the court orders such a home study, this is referred to as an *order of reference*.

Procedures

A. Responding to orders of reference that do not allege abuse/neglect

When the court issues an order of reference that does not allege abuse/neglect the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Upon receipt of an order of reference the case manager shall complete a DCS records search to ascertain if there are past reports on the child, parents/caretakers or petitioner.
2. The case manager shall enter the order of reference on the TN KIDS court intake screen.
3. The case manager shall conduct face-to-face interviews with the child, parents/caretakers and the petitioner.

4. The case manager shall contact collaterals that may have information regarding the circumstances of the child and family.
5. The case manager shall contact references of the petitioner to inquire about their suitability to care for the child.
6. The case manager shall make a visit to the home of the petitioner and the parent/caretaker to assess the living arrangements.
7. The case manager shall complete a court report, following the format of the local office. This report shall be sent to the judge before the date on the order of reference or prior to any court hearing.

**B. Responding to
orders of
reference alleging
abuse/neglect**

1. When the court issues an order of reference alleging abuse or neglect, the report shall be assigned as a CPS investigation to a DCS case manager.
2. Upon the receipt of the order of reference the case manager shall research all DCS records (paper files and TN KIDS) to determine if there is a past history on the child, parents/caretakers and petitioner.
3. The case manager shall complete a CPS investigation. Please refer to DCS policy 14.5, *Investigation of Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect*.
4. Where available, the case manager shall complete a police background records check on the parents/caretakers and petitioner.
5. The case manager shall enter the case into TN KIDS.
6. The case manager shall conduct the following face-to-face interviews:
 - a) Child/children, petitioner, parent/care taker (to assess the petitioner's ability to protect the child/children from further abuse/neglect),
 - b) Collateral contacts (individuals who may have information regarding the circumstances of the child and family), and
 - c) References on the petitioners.

7. The case manager shall make a home visit to the petitioners to assess the physical location where the child/children may reside.
8. The case manager shall submit the report to the court, after approval by a team leader, the report shall be submitted by the due date on the order of reference or prior to any court hearing.

Forms

None

Collateral Documents

None

Standards

None

Glossary

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Order of reference</i>	Refers to a court order requesting DCS or it's partner agency, the CSA's, to conduct a study of a child's (or children's) situation and requiring a written report to the court on a given date. Orders of reference involve allegations of child abuse or neglect, or they may simply inquire about the circumstances of a specific child or children.